# Positive Communication Strategies in Crisis Communication

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# Objectives

a) Discuss principles of crisis communication

b) Outline the four phases of crisis management cycle

c) Describe generational differences that contribute to misunderstanding in communication

# What is Crisis Communication?

- Collection and dissemination of information related to an emergency or other situation.

- If effective protects an organization's operation and reputation by providing context around a particular issue or incident

- Most often responsibilities fall on administrators or is the District has a Public Information Officer (PIO) or public relations professionals (external concerns) and Human Resources (internal, operational)

- Needs to be part of overall planning for continuity and emergency planning

**Natural Disaster**
**Community Violence**
**Health Concerns**

# Why Is Crisis Communication Important?

## News Travels Fast

- Researchers (Massachusetts Institute of Technology- 2018): of an estimated 126,000 Twitter news stories 70% of false or fabricated news stories were more likely to be "liked" or retweeted than true stories.

- In crisis there is an instant and sometimes insatiable desire for information
  - Pressure on organizations to use all available communication channels to set the record straight.
  - A well-designed crisis communications plan can help clear up the confusion
  - Having a crisis communication plan also helps counter the spread of misinformation

- Crisis communication protect your people and your operations.

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FAKE NEWS
"Travels Faster"

# Social Media

**"Text me, Facebook me, tweet @ me, IM me if you wanna reach me."**
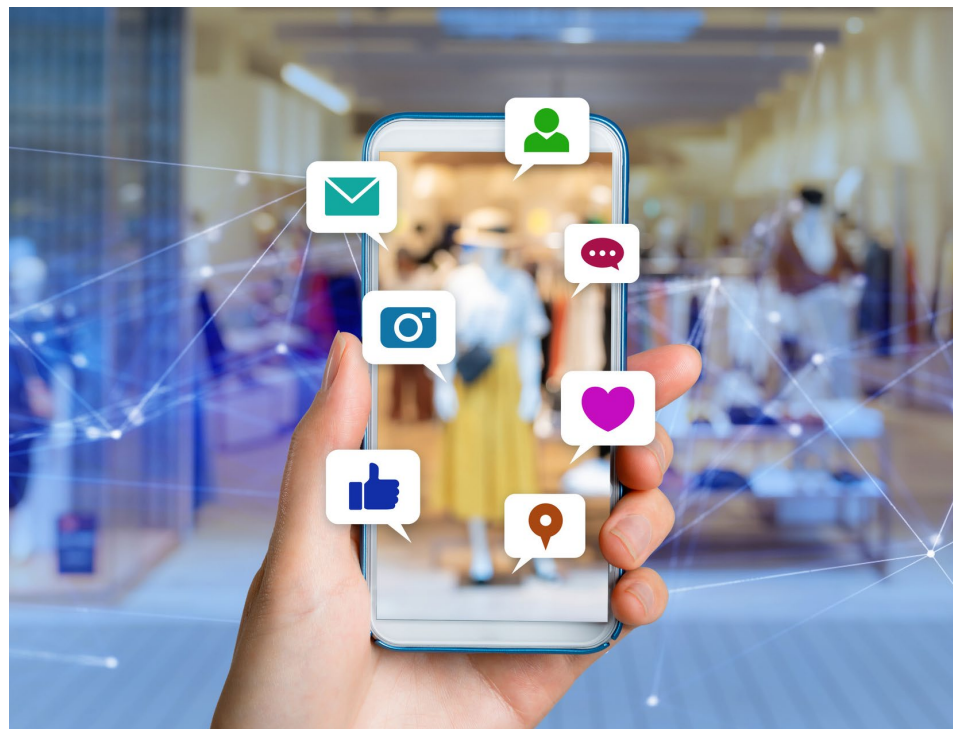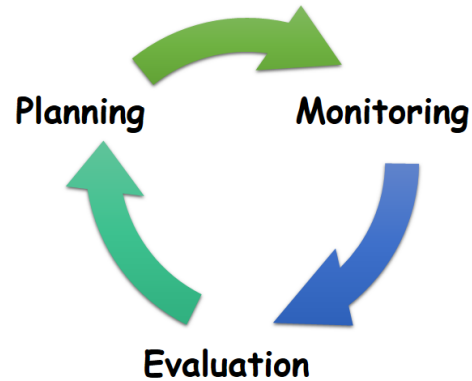


**Constant communication**

**Access to information**

Lack of privacy, social pressure, need to be informed

**Instant gratification**

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# 3 Rules for Crisis Communication
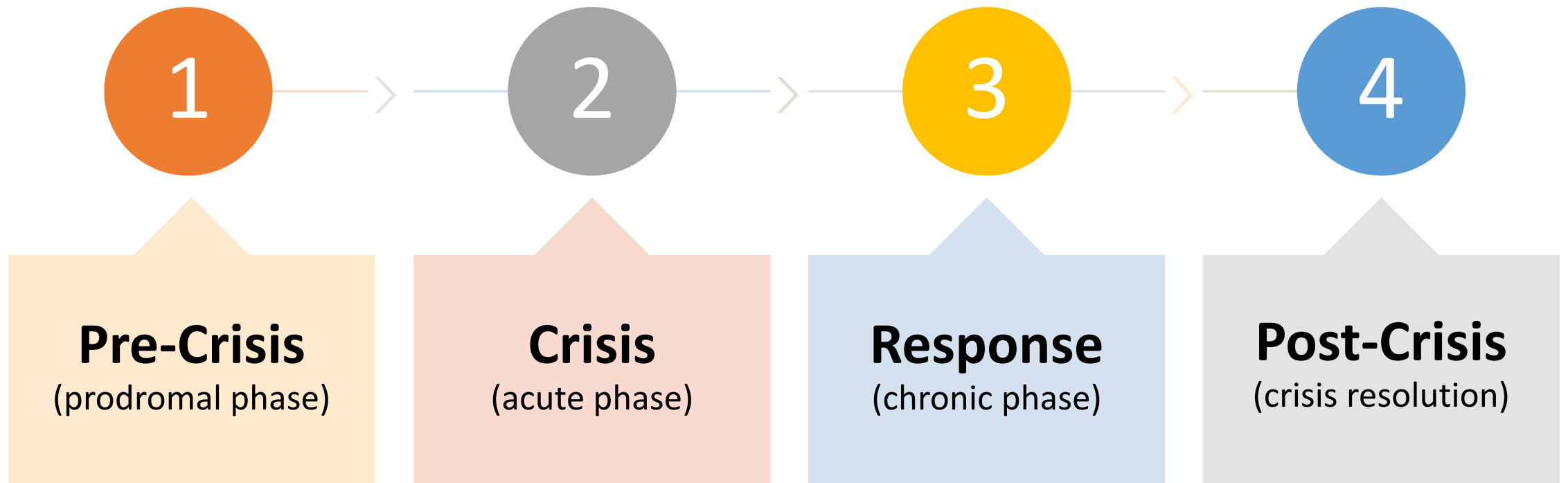
Planning

Monitoring

Evaluation

1. **Plan Ahead**
   Create a detailed contingency/scenario plan that outlines every conceivable crisis and appropriate response.

2. **Speed Is Key**
   It's imperative to acknowledge crisis situations immediately.

3. **Be Responsibly Transparent**
   Take responsibility. Tell the truth. Never engage in cover-up, deceit, or unethical behavior of any kind.
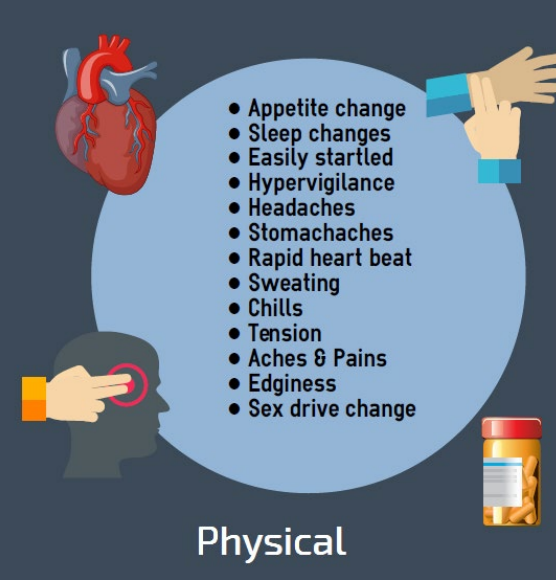
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# When Crisis Happens

| | |
|---|---|
| **Gather** | Gather the crisis team. |
| **Get** | Get the facts. |
| **Determine** | Determine who needs to know what, and when. |
| **Form** | Form your messaging plan as you go. |
| **Discuss** | Discuss how you will communicate. |

# The Four Stages of a Crisis

**1** — **Pre-Crisis** (prodromal phase)

**2** — **Crisis** (acute phase)

**3** — **Response** (chronic phase)

**4** — **Post-Crisis** (crisis resolution)

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# Individual Reactions to Crisis



**Physical**
- Appetite change
- Sleep changes
- Easily startled
- Hypervigilance
- Headaches
- Stomachaches
- Rapid heart beat
- Sweating
- Chills
- Tension
- Aches & Pains
- Edginess
- Sex drive change

**Thoughts**
- Flashbacks
- Nightmares
- Previous trauma
- Suspicious
- Blaming
- Poor concentration
- Forgetfulness
- Confusion
- Belief life won't get better

**Behaviors**
- Isolatiing
- Pacing
- Fidgeting
- Fighting / Arguing
- Fatigue
- Reckless / Risk-taking
- Work or School problems

**Emotions**
- Disbelief
- Fear
- Helpless/Hopeless
- Anxiety
- Loss of Trust
- Feeling detached
- Irritable
- Anger
- GUilt
- Restless
- Sadness
- Numbness

*May be Intense May Change over time*

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# Best Practices: _How_ of Communicating in a Crisis

**Be human** - Be transparent about how the current challenges are impacting you. Demonstrating vulnerability can help generate trust. Connecting on a human level communicates care, reduces the threat response, and encourages healthy communication.

**Get eyeball to eyeball.** With all the technology currently available, there's no excuse to not at least occasionally connect on video. This is a key best practice for virtual meetings.

**Listen to understand.** Actively listen without trying to solve people's problems right away. Take a wider lens. Pay attention to the facts, feelings, and values they're expressing. By starting with understanding, you can get the whole message and help others feel heard.

**Focus on the person, not the problem.** Avoid the impulse to jump in with your own solutions. Ask thought-provoking questions that help surface understanding and insight to help others come up with their own solutions, for a sense of empowerment during a time when they may be feeling powerless

**Manage self-care.** Trying to solve everyone's problems for them during a crisis is an express lane to your own burnout. That helps no one.

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# Best Practices: _What_ to Communicate in Crisis

**Deliver essential information in a quick, clear, and transparent manner.**

People are overwhelmed with the amount of information coming at them and need essential information that can help them get through this crisis. Being under tremendous pressure at work and at home, they may not have the band width to digest it all.

Focus on essential information and embrace brevity. Share what you know when you know it.

**Share what you _don't_ know, in addition to what you _do_ know.**

No one may have all the answers right away and acting like you do will damage your credibility and your ability to connect with people. Be honest and embrace the ambiguity of the situation. Share what you're able to. People will appreciate and resonate with honest, direct messaging.

**Make it clear what people can look to for stability and guidance.**

In a moment where it seems like everything is shifting and up for grabs, let others know what remains stable. Clarify and emphasize what is not changed.

Helping staff, students, parents and the community see how difficult decisions are being made with the organization's values as guideposts can reassure them that there's a "method to the madness."

Reinforce core commitments like "how we can make a positive impact" and "why we're doing this in the first place" can instill meaning and purpose during a time of struggle.

# Best Practices: _When_ to Communicate in Crisis

**Communicate broadly, repeatedly, and through multiple means.**

- To stand out above the noise, don't just rely on one particular medium or platform. Remember the 3 R's: _review, repeat, and reinforce._

- Take the extra time to **review** information with your team, to **repeat** the information to help it sink in, and to **reinforce** the key points of your information.

**Explain _before_ questions and concerns are submitted, when possible.**

- In crisis, people can be overwhelmed with just getting through their lives that they may not have the capacity to reach out with questions and concerns. Take initiative to connect with your team to show them that you're on the front line dealing with the crisis and that you're willing to support them.

**Remember Self Care**

It is not selfish and is extremely difficult to lead others if you're not in a good place yourself.
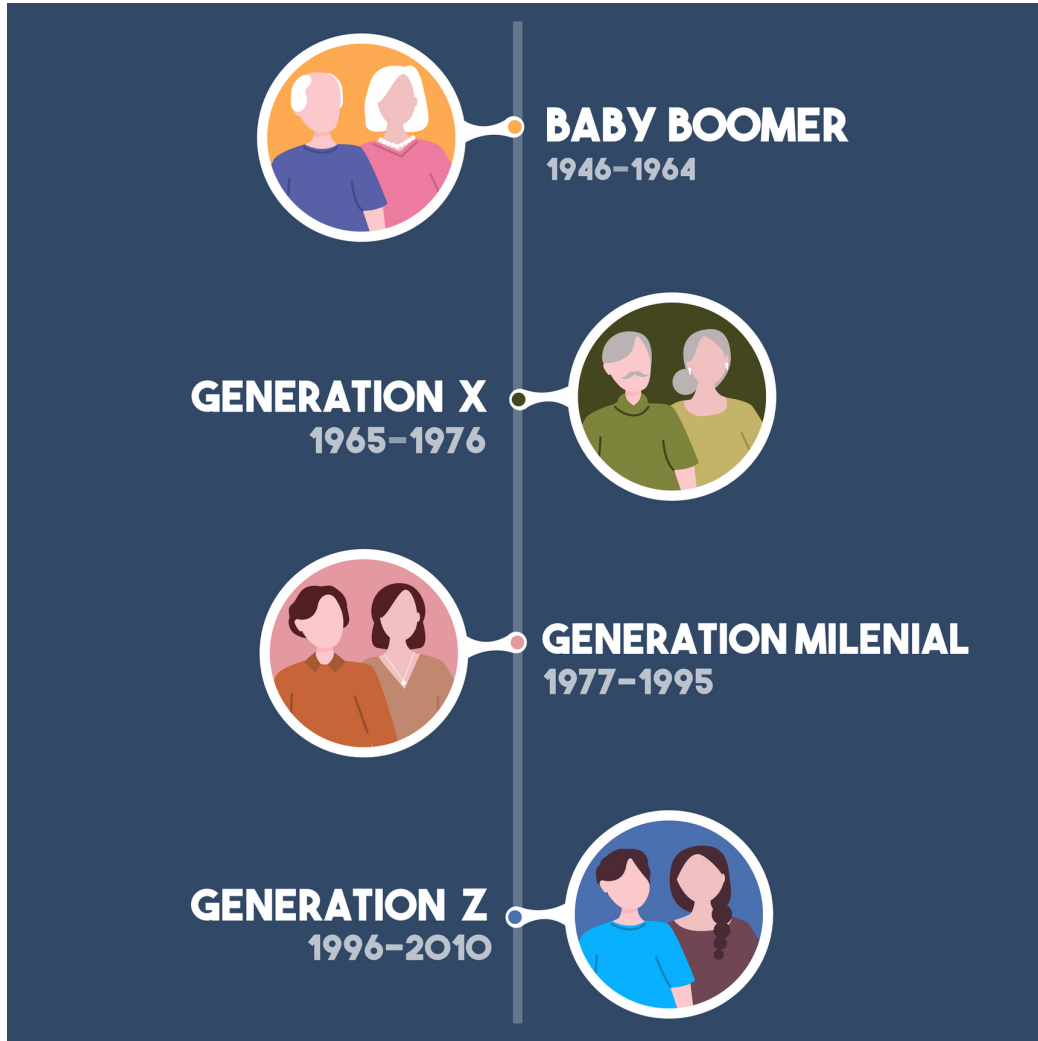
# Right Here Right Now!

Millennials can be defined both by their strongly held values and their strong intention to live by them. Generation Y is passionate about making a difference in the world. This is a common thread through dozens of values studies conducted globally.

# 8 things from the '90s Zers Don't Quite Get...

Listening to music on cassette players

Drawing a picture on an Etch-a-Sketch – the forerunner of creative drawing tablets.

Making a pay phone call.

Transistor radios: Invented in 1947, it was revolutionary for its time. Today it's a rare site.

Myspace, the first social networking site of choice

Paper maps: With step-by-step directions on Google maps, paper maps are a thing of the past.

Fax machines, the original email.

Typing a letter on a typewriter.

# Gen Z Firsts...

- The first generation that has never known a world without the World Wide Web

- The first generation that has never used a phone with a cord.

- The first generation that has no idea what floppy disks are.

# Discussion Questions

- What are your experiences with crisis risk communication?

- What are your experiences with threat assessment teams?

- What are your connections in the community that can assist in managing crisis?

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